647

29

REFORMATION

IN

Worshipping of GOD

REQUIRED,

1718.

According to the Means afforded of a clearer Knowledg of the Divine Will.

WE find the Apostles *Barnabas* and *Paul* at *Lystra*, telling the People who were ready to worship them under the Notion of their Gods *Jupiter* and *Mercurius*, and saying, *We are Men of like Passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these Vanities unto the Living God, —who in times past suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways: Nevertheless, he did good, and gave us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness.* Acts 14. 15, 16, 17. As if he should say, The true God in all Times before gave Testimony of himself by Creation, and Common Providence; however he did not soon execute Vengeance upon Idolatrous Nations as they deserved, but suffered them to walk after their own Imaginations, as you at this Day: But now he does by us, attended by miraculous Power, call you to Repentance. Likewise the same Apostle *Paul* preaching to the *Athenians*, among whom he had found *an Altar, with this Inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*, tells them thus: *Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the World, and all Things therein, —— in whom we live, and move, and have our being, —— Forasmuch as we are his Off-spring, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto Gold or Silver*, &c. such Things as they worshipped Him by. But he tells them withal, that *the times of this Ignorance God winked at.* They had not such clear Discoveries of Him as the *Jews*, therefore God bare with them: *But*

now (ſaith he) *he commandeth all Men EVERY WHERE to repent:* How ſo? *Becauſe he hath appointed a Day in which he will judg the World in Righteouſneſs——whereof he hath given aſſurance* [Faith] *unto all Men,* [to wit, to whom it is preached] *in that he hath raiſed Jeſus from the Dead.* Acts 17.23,24,28,29,31.

According to this Method of dealing more ſeverely with thoſe that have more of Light and Knowledg, God threatens *Iſrael*, ſaying by *Amos*, chap. 3. 2. *You only have I known of all the Families of the Earth: therefore will I puniſh you for all your Iniquities.* For (as the Pſalmiſt ſays) *He ſheweth his Words unto* Jacob, *his Statutes and Judgments unto* Iſrael. *He hath not dealt ſo with any Nation: and as for his Judgments they have not known them.* And our Lord Chriſt upbraids the Cities wherein moſt of his mighty Works were done, becauſe they repented not, ſaying, *It ſhall be more tolerable for* Tyre *and* Sidon *at the day of Judgment than for you.*

Upon this ground we may ſafely judg that our Forefathers who lived when the Popiſh Ignorance, Superſtition and Idolatry prevail'd, ſhall be mercifully dealt with in the day of Judgment, provided they were Devout and Charitable according to their Knowledg: But we cannot judg ſo favourably of thoſe in the Days of the Reformation, who perſiſted in thoſe Impieties of worſhipping as God, a Conſecrated Wafer; and as Mediators and Helpers, dead Men and Women, invocating them, and Angels whom they know not; with an hundred other groſs Superſtitions and Follies. If it was the Duty of all Chriſtians, eſpecially of the Teachers and Leaders, to labour after a clearer Knowledg of the Will of God, and the Worſhip becoming Him, and acceptable to Him, and to practiſe ſutably; and the Reformers did ſo: Then they that were either negligent in ſeeking to know, or for Carnal Reſpects diſobedient to their Knowledg, are highly guilty, and may expect the Puniſhment of thoſe that know their Great Maſter's Will, and do it not.

And is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe that in ſo great a Defection from, and Corruption of the true Worſhip of God, thoſe Corrupters did ſtill maintain the true Notion, Idea or Conception of God as an Object of Worſhip in all his Attributes? No, ſo far from that, that the Learned Men in the 12th Century ſaw clearly, that thoſe Terms of Trinity, three coequal Perſons in God, whereof each is Eternal, Almighty, All-knowing, Infinite, Perfect God, and the like, did beget in the Minds of Chriſtians, both Clergy and Laity (as they diſtinguiſh'd) and in ſome of the very Learned, the Conception and Notion of three equal Gods, however call'd One; therefore was Convened that very great Council of *Lateran*, *Anno* 1215, wherein it was decreed, that thoſe Words and Terms abovenamed ſhould be taken in ſuch a Senſe as imports not three underſtanding Spirits, Minds or Subſtances; but one only, with three Properties, Conſiderations or Operations, as one and the ſame Man may bear three Perſons, to wit, of a Father, a Lord, a Huſband: Or as the one real Perſon or Spirit which God is, may be conceived as Original Mind the Father, and as Reflex Wiſdom the Son, and as the ſame Perſon willing and loving himſelf, the Holy Ghoſt. But they ſtill made uſe of thoſe Terms aforementioned in their Worſhip and Liturgies, and gave no ſufficient Intimation of the alteration of their meaning; by which means the common People and many of the Learned, and all the leſs Learned Clergy ſtill took thoſe Terms in the Heretical Senſe they had been ſo long uſed to. Inſomuch that even at this Day this is the Senſe generally of the Unlearned Proteſtants, and of very many of the Learned. Whence it came to paſs that the Dean of *Paul's*, Dr. *Sherlock*, writing *A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Bleſſed Trinity*, againſt the Brief Notes upon the *Athanaſian* Creed, calls that Doctrine, of three Relative Perſons in one Real Perſon, Hereſy and Nonſenſe, and expreſſes himſelf in thoſe very Terms of three Spirits, three Minds, three Subſtances: And divers of the Biſhops and Learned

Learned Men have publiſhed their Explications of the three real Perſons in God to the ſame effect, particularly the moſt Ingenious and Learned Mr. *How* has, in his *Enquiry, &c.* and the Defences of it given out that *there are three Divine Perſons in the Godhead really diſtinct*; ſo that *they have a delicious Society or Converſation with each other.* See his *View*, &c. *pag.* 18. And in the ſame place he ſays, *I will not thank him* [the Conſiderer] *for acknowledging it to have been the Opinion of the Fathers generally, not only* Ante-Nicene *and* Nicene, *but* Poſt-Nicene *too, for ſome following Ages.*

On the other hand, Dr. *S---th* has publiſhed two very bitter tho learned Books againſt Dr. *Sherlock*, on the account of that Doctrine: the latter he titles, *Tritheiſm charged upon Dr.* Sherlock's *Notion of the Trinity.* And the Heads of Colleges and Halls with the Vice-Chancellor of *Oxford* have decreed, upon occaſion of a Sermon preached before 'em, aſſerting, that the three Perſons in the Trinity are three diſtinct Infinite Minds or Spirits, (which is exactly Dr. *Sherlock*'s Doctrine) that thoſe Words are *falſe, impious and heretical, diſagreeing, and contrary to the Doctrine of the Catholick Church, and ſpecially of the Church of* England *publickly received.*

In anſwer to this Decree Dr. *Sherlock* writes a Tract he titles *A Modeſt Examination of the* Oxford *Decree*; wherein he ſays (*pag.* 6.) *I will undertake any Day in the Year, to procure a Meeting of twice as many, as wiſe and learned Men, to cenſure their Decree.* I have noted theſe Paſſages out of theſe learned Controvertiſts, to ſhew how vaſtly they differ, and how dangerous to Salvation they reckon each others Faith and Worſhip; and yet how confidently they on both Sides lay claim to the Fathers and Catholick Church.

Now this Point being by both Parties accounted a Fundamental of Chriſtian Religion, wherein our Eternal Eſtate is neceſſarily concern'd, every one that is ſerious and duly careful, muſt now betake himſelf to a deep Conſideration of the Difference between theſe two Explications of thoſe Terms; which perhaps he thought before had but one only Senſe. And we muſt not ſay, as we were wont, that it's too high a Doctrine for us to underſtand and determin; for that is to talk as Parrots, and to pretend that profeſſing to believe Sounds and Words without Senſe, and to worſhip an unknown God, is the neceſſary Chriſtian Faith and Worſhip. This ſtrange Doctrine was the great Bone of Contention among Chriſtians, and produc'd infinite Wars, Confuſions, Hatreds, and Maſſacres of the contending Parties for ſeveral Ages after the Deceaſe of the Apoſtles and Apoſtolical Men; and has in all Ages been diſputed by ſome or other ſerious and underſtanding Chriſtians, ſome of which have been made Martyrs or Confeſſors for their Conſcience toward God. And ſince the Reformation began, there have been divers Perſons in other Countries, and ſome in *England*, who have undergone that Hell-deviſed Death of Burning, for aſſerting the Unity of God, and Lordſhip of Jeſus Chriſt. But now within theſe ſeven or eight Years, this Controverſy having been more accurately handled, it appears that the Doctrine of the Unitarians is the very Doctrine of the Univerſal Church, if we may give credit to the great Council of *Lateran*, I mention'd, held near 500 Years ago, or the Learned Heads of *Oxford* about fourteen Months ſince. I mean, that the Council and Univerſity agree with the Unitarians in their Explications, tho not in their Words and Terms, which do indeed expreſs the Senſe of the Realiſts, whoſe Sentiments we all oppoſe.

And now that the Pretence of Myſtery and Obſcurity is done away, I would appeal to every conſcientious Perſon, whether he is not obliged by the Fear and Love of God to examine himſelf in what Senſe he has hitherto worſhipped God; what Conception and Idea he had of him; whether as three equal Almighty real Perſons or Spirits, or one only. If as three, whether he is not

oblig'd in the higheſt Obligation to Repentance and Reformation; if as one only Perſon or Spirit, then he is oblig'd to the utmoſt humble Acknowledgments of Thanks and Praiſe to God, who preſerv'd him in ſo great a Truth, amidſt ſo great Obſcurity, among ſo great a Multitude of Erroneous. And further, I think he cannot chuſe but put off his Averſion and Animoſity to the Unitarians, and acknowledg them for true Chriſtian Brethren, labouring with them to propagate the Faith of that great Prerogative of the Moſt High, *his Unity* as well in Perſon, as Spirit and Subſtance.

I am very ſenſible of the great Reſpect and Reverence that particular Perſons bear to thoſe they have long been addicted to as Learned and Pious Men: But the Reflection is obvious, that there are Perſons eſteemed Learned and Pious on both Sides; ſo that this Argument from the Veneration we have for our Leaders, is as ſtrong againſt us as for us, and gives no greater value to the Doctrine of the one than of the other. It is indeed a Popiſh Doctrine and Practice, when we are determined to Faith and the Profeſſion of it, not by the Light in our Underſtandings, but by the Preference we give to one above another that ariſeth from our Affections. And poſſibly a Learned Man may be able to give ſuch a Senſe to the Words he uſes in worſhipping God, as may make it innocent, which the leſs Learned are not able to do, foraſmuch as it depends upon Metaphyſical Diſtinctions, which but a few are verſed in. But we cannot be excus'd in our Worſhip of God, if we offer him a blind or a diſhonourable Service. The Perfection of the Goſpel-Worſhippers lies in this, that we worſhip him *in Spirit* and *in Truth*: But that Worſhip is not in Spirit that is not in Underſtanding, and a Senſe both in our Minds and Hearts of what we ſay to the Divine Majeſty: And that is not in Truth which is not a ſubſtantial Acknowledgment of Excellency in Himſelf, and Benefits to us above and in all others whomſoever.

But that I may not only put you upon reformation of your Conceptions of God when you worſhip him, I will propoſe to you ſuch plain Scriptural Expreſſions concerning God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, as readily ſuggeſt to us true and pious Notions of thoſe Sacred Three, and which do not contradict one another.

A Confeſſion of Faith, &c.

" I Believe there is a God, that is, an Eternal, Almighty, only wiſe and only good Spirit, Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Father of all, the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and our God and Father; and that this God is *One* in the moſt perfect Senſe of Oneneſs, whereby all other real Perſons or Spirits are excluded from Godhead; therefore ſaith our Lord Chriſt, *The firſt of all the Commandments is, Hear O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord* [or the Lord is One.] *And thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart*, &c. *Mar.* 12.29. Which if we perform to one, we cannot perform to more than

" than one. And the same Christ " repelled the Tempter (desiring " to be worshipped) in these " Words: *Thou shalt worship the* " *Lord thy God, and him ONLY* " *shalt thou serve*, Mat. 4. He " only whom the Jews, and Jesus " a Jew, and all Men ought to " worship and serve, is that one " God.

" I believe that Jesus the Son of " the Blessed Virgin is that great " Prophet, the Messias or Christ, " and Son of God, who was pro- " phesied of *by* Moses, *by the Pro-* " *phets, and in the* Psalms, *Luke* " 24. 44. That his God and *Father* " *sanctified and sent him into the* " *World, being anointed with the Ho-* " *ly Ghost and with Power; who went* " *about doing good, and healing all* " *that were oppressed of the Devil,* " *for God was with him*, Acts 10. " *This Jesus of* Nazareth, *a Man* " *approved of God among the Jews,* " *by Miracles, Wonders and Signs* " *which God did by him — Him —* " *ye have taken, and by wicked Hands* " *have crucified and slain; whom God* " *hath raised up, and exalted with his* " *right hand to be a Prince and a Sa-* " *viour, to give Repentance to* Israel, " *and Remission of Sins. This Jesus* " *having receiv'd of the Father the* " *Promise of the Holy Ghost, shed him* " *forth upon the Apostles and Disci-* " *ples. Therefore let all the House of* " Israel *know assuredly, that God hath* " *made that same Jesus, whom ye have* " *crucified, both Lord and Christ.* " To him was *committed all Power in* " *Heaven and in Earth: Go ye there-* " *fore* (saith he) *bap-* " *tize all Nations into* " *the Name of the Fa-* " *ther*, [who gave him " that Power] *and of* " *the Son*, [who re- " ceiv'd it] *and of the* " *Holy Ghost*, [the Gift " or Power it self.] *And because* " *he humbled himself, and became obe-* " *dient to Death, even the Death of* " *the Cross, therefore God hath highly* " *exalted him, and given him a Name* " *above every Name, that at the* " *Name of Jesus every Knee should* " *bow —— and every Tongue should* " *confess, that Jesus is Lord, to the* " *Glory of God the Father.* [How " can they be excused of Denying " the Father this Glory of Exalting " Christ, who say he was the most " high Lord before his Exaltati- " on?] *All Judgment is committed* " *to the Son by the Father, that all* " *Men should honour the Son, even as* " *they honour the Father that sent him.* " This is that which Christ himself " teacheth for the obtaining of " *Eternal Life, that we might know* " (and acknowledg) *the Father the* " *only true God, and Jesus Christ whom* " *he hath sent.* And *the Word of* " *Faith* is this, viz. *That if thou* " *shalt confess with thy Mouth the* " *Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in* " *thine Heart that God raised him*

Administrabatur Baptismus, ut loquitur Hilarius, in confessione & Auctoris & Unigeniti & Doni. *Grot. in loc.*

" *from*

" *from the Dead, thou ſhalt be* " *ſaved.*

" In fine, it appears from Holy " Scripture, that God did ſo dwell " and work in the Son, that he and " the Father were in that reſpect " one; and by reaſon of that One- " neſs, Chriſt might be called not " only the Son of God, but God, " in the ſame Senſe, as himſelf " argues, *Joh.* 10. 35, 36, 37. But " it's always to be underſtood that " whatſoever Divine Works or " Powers, Attributes or Names, " Honour or Worſhip are given to " the Son, which cannot agree to " him as a Man exalted ſimply and " properly, they are all given to " him by virtue of God even the " Father dwelling and working and " abiding in him. Thus our Lord " tells *Philip*, *He that hath ſeen me,* " *hath ſeen the Father*; *and that the* " *Father that dwelt in him, he did the* " *Works*; *he that believeth on me,* " *believeth not on me, but on him that* " *ſent me*; *and he that ſeeth me, ſeeth* " *him that ſent me.* Hence the A- " poſtle *Peter* ſaith, that *Chriſt was* " *manifeſt in theſe laſt Times for you,* " *who by him believe in God that rai-* " *ſed him from the Dead, and gave* " *him Glory, that your Faith and Hope* " *might be in God.*

" Concerning the Holy Ghoſt it's " clearly recorded in Scripture, " that *Jeſus being baptized and pray-* " *ing, the Heaven was opened, and the* " *Holy Ghoſt deſcended on him in a* " *bodily Shape like a Dove.* Hence " he is ſaid *to be anointed with the* " *Holy Ghoſt and Power*; and that " *he caſt out Devils by the Spirit or* " *Finger of God.* By the ſame Spi- " rit *he gave Power to his twelve* " *Apoſtles, and ſeventy Diſciples, over* " *unclean Spirits to caſt them out,* " *and to heal all manner of Sickneſs.*

Thus the Miraculous Powers or Divine Works which Chriſt did, are ſometimes attributed to Chriſt himſelf, ſometimes to God even the Father working in Chriſt, ſometimes to the Holy Ghoſt as ſent of God to enable Chriſt: And ſo the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit concur in the effecting of the ſame Work. In like manner, ſince the Aſcenſion of Chriſt, the miraculous ſpeaking with Tongues is aſcribed to the Holy Ghoſt received of the Father, and ſhed forth by the Son who received him. This is the Scripture-Trinity in Unity. But as for that Trinity, which Dr. *Sherlock* and divers late Writers contend for, *viz.* That the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt are three infinite diſtinct Spirits, Minds or Subſtances, I think with the learned Heads of the Univerſity of *Oxon*, that they who knowingly worſhip ſuch a Trinity, do worſhip three Gods, which is a matter of the higheſt moment to beware of; in Compariſon with which other Controverſies of Religion are of light Conſideration.

But notwithſtanding the great Importance of it, the danger of violating the firſt and chief Commandment, yet the moſt ſcrupulous Pretenders to pure Worſhip, and the moſt zealous Contenders in ſmall matters will ſcarcely vouchſafe to ſpend a ſerious Thought upon it; nay think themſelves ſo Infallible in this Point, that they reject the Conſiderations offer'd them concerning it with the greateſt Contempt. There have been many Tracts publiſh'd of late Years touching this Controverſy, among which one

of

of worshipping the Holy Ghost expressly, as a Person equal to, and distinct from the Father. Wherein both Conformists and Dissenters are seriously call'd upon to justify to their own Consciences, or to repent of, their Customary Worship. But this latter they have not done, and it does not appear that they have or can do the former; for I have not heard of any Answer to that Print, or any Defence of the Practice therein impugned. On the contrary, Dr. *S---th* and the *Oxford* Heads in their Writings against Dr. *Sherlock*, and the Doctrine of three real Persons or Spirits in the Trinity, (which they have condemned as false, impious and heretical, contrary to the Doctrine of the Catholick Church, and especially of the Church of *England:*) Those learned Men, I say, have plainly confirm'd the Argument against Worshipping the Holy Ghost expressly, as a Person or Spirit equal to and distinct from the Father. For understanding by the Person of the Holy Ghost a Spirit or intelligent Being distinct from the Father, (as the Author of that Tract about Worshipping the Holy Ghost does) they pronounce such Doctrine, and much more such Worshipping to be impious and heretical. But you'll say, those learned Heads do still allow the Worship of the Church of *England*, wherein the Holy Ghost is worshipped expressly as a distinct Person from the Father. I grant they do: But then you must deeply consider that they put quite another Sense upon the word *Person* than the Generality of Worshippers both learned and unlearned are wont to do; for they mean by the Person of the Holy Ghost, that one Person of God the Father as Sanctifier, or as internally related to himself, as a Lover of himself, and so proceeding of himself: In which Senses they have the Unitarians agreeing with them. But I doubt the Generality of Worshippers whether in the Church or Conventicle do not, nor can in their Devotions form in their Minds any such Notion or Idea of the Holy Ghost, when they worship him expressly as distinct from the Father: And if they do not, then is their Worship censur'd by those learned Men as false, impious and heretical.

Now tho' no Arguments from Scripture or Reason, nor the Fear of God could prevail with Men, against their Argument of Number and Custom, to open their Eyes to the clear shining Light, yet I hope that now they find their Party divided, and consequently their Number broken, they will consider the Merits of the Cause, and endeavour to satisfy their Consciences in the Object of their Divine Worship; that they will at length see with their own Eyes, and not blindly follow the Multitude, and like Papists (not Protestants) believe and worship as the Church believes and worships, without understanding in what Sense: And that they will oblige their Preachers to tell them what Conception they ought to have of Almighty God in their worshipping of him, and not leave them, as they have hitherto done, in danger of an impious Worship, or of the Worship of three coequal Gods. For tho they would not say the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were three Gods, yet the Descriptions they gave of every one of those three distinctly from each other, did as clearly represent them as three Gods as if they had said it in those very Terms. From hence have arose all those Disputes, Contentions, Persecutions, and Slaughters (I have mention'd) in the former Ages of the Church, as the several Parties could get the Emperor on their Side. For whilst one Party was zealous for the Oneness of God, and another for the Trinity or Threeness of God; the Honour of the All-glorious God, and our Veneration of him are so deeply concern'd, that the Unitarians must necessarily be condemn'd (as they were) in the most enormous Guilt of denying the Acknowledgment and Worship of an Almighty Person, and Spirit, each of which had an equal Right to be acknowledged and worship'd as a Person or Spirit, which they did worship as the most High God. On the other hand, the Unitarians could do no less than account those Trinitarians as Tritheists, or Worshippers of three Gods,

Gods, whilſt they did expreſly worſhip three diſtinct Perſons or Spirits equally Almighty, All-knowing, All-good, Infinite and Eternal, one as another; which is a full Deſcription of three Gods. And thus it is at this day, as manifeſtly appears by the hot Contention between the Realiſts headed by Dr. *Sherlock*, and the Nominals headed by Dr. *S--th*, as I have ſaid: For the Nominals are Unitarians in ſenſe and meaning, tho not in Words.

Are not then your Preachers highly guilty, in that they have not warn'd you of that great Hazard you were in, in your daily worſhipping of the Great and Holy God? Some of 'em that are learned, and underſtood the great Importance of the different Sentiments of theſe two Parties, have declar'd themſelves in Print: But whether they did in their Pulpits I know not, you that heard them can beſt tell; and when you examin your Conſciences, you may acquit or condemn your ſelves in this matter, as you do knowingly worſhip God as One all-wiſe Spirit, Mind or Subſtance, or Three ſuch. In like manner may you judg of the Skill and Faithfulneſs of your Teachers, if they have or have not duly informed you in this chiefeſt and moſt weighty Point of Religion. They have been I know very diligent and earneſt in Decrying and Condemning the Unitarians under the name of Socinians, and in Aſſerting the ſupreme Deity of the Son and Holy Spirit: But have they taught you (that which they can by no means agree of among themſelves) how to reconcile three Almighty diſtinct Spirits, ſo as to make them numerically one and the ſame Spirit? Have they taught you how to conceive of him that worſhips God, that he is that God whom he worſhips? Of him that is ſent of God to do, not his own Will, but the Will of him that ſent him; that he is that God who ſent him, and whoſe Will he came to do? Of him that without Equivocation and with Aſſeveration ſays he *can do nothing* (that is, no Miraculous Work) *of himſelf*; that he is the Almighty who can do all things of himſelf? Have they taught you how to believe him to be the moſt high God, who denies himſelf to be ſo; but confeſſes another to be he? or which is the ſame, how he could then be All-knowing as the Father, who denies himſelf to know the Day and Hour of Judgment, which the Father only knew? How he could be made by God *a Prince and a Saviour*, who was always the moſt high God? or be made and acknowledged to be Lord to the Glory of God the Father, when he was Eternally the moſt high Lord and God as the Father? Theſe are but a few of thoſe many Contradictions which you ſhould be taught to reconcile, according to the Doctrine of three Almighty Spirits or Perſons. If your Guides have taught you that in Eternity there was and is but one Almighty Spirit, who did in time manifeſt himſelf to dwell in and do miraculous Works by Jeſus his Chriſt; and who after Chriſt was taken up into Heaven, did by him pour out the Holy Spirit upon the Apoſtles and Diſciples; and did thereby conſtitute him his Son with Power according to the Spirit of Sanctification, not only according to the Fleſh as he was alſo the Son of *David*; then they and the Unitarians are of one and the ſame Faith; and they are very injurious to inveigh againſt them as Blaſphemers and Hereticks, whom they ought to acknowledg for Chriſtian Brethren, and Defenders of the Faith of the Goſpel.

THE END.

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